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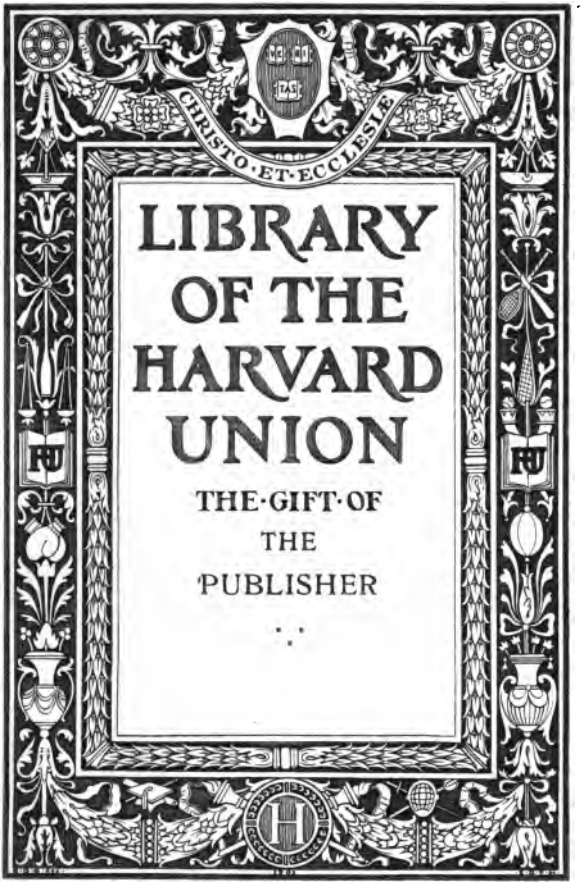
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THE ART OF FOLLY

SHERIDAN FORD

KF 16236



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The Art of Folly

THE ART OF FOLLY

By

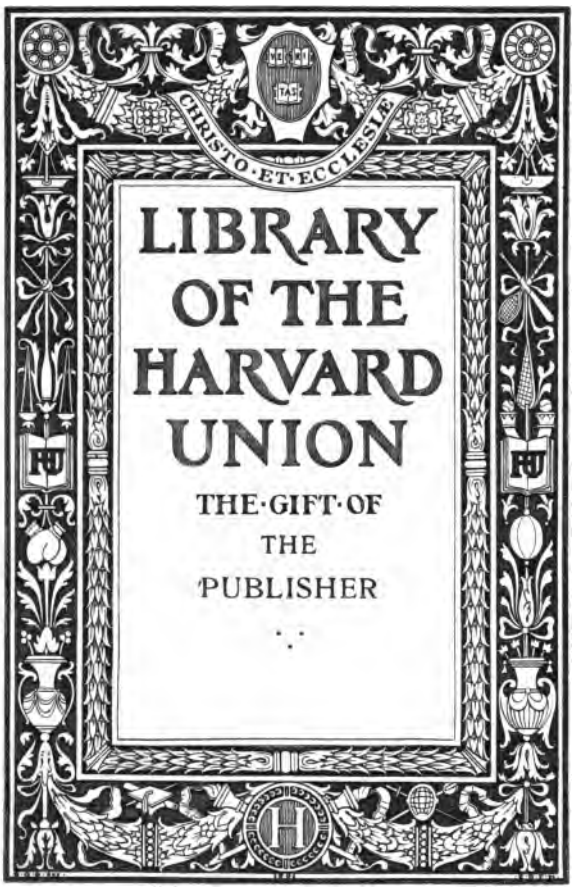
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ADVERTISEMENT

THE superstition of paint has caused more confusion among the sons of men than predestination by faith. To cover a piece of cloth with colour was thought a proof of genius once upon a time; but the theory is dwindling in the light of publicity. The talent and training to paint in a way that will satisfy the official juries are of a mild and usual order. It was reserved, indeed, for the craft itself to demonstrate that pictorial art and painting are not synonymous.

The official show, imposed upon the public as a shrine of art, is, primarily, a device to advertise the studio of the Philistine. Impossible paintings vie with each other in chase of the medal; the clique in power bestows the coveted prize with conscientious partiality, and the mob applauds. Paint lingers in the lap of literature, while 'historical' and sentimental fictions take the place of lyric beauty.

Art is not based upon the subject treated, but upon the treatment of the subject. Subject is art's apology for decoration.

ADVERTISEMENT

No sane mind expects that pictorial art will ever be appreciated of the general, but it would seem that there might be some precision in discussing it. Nothing can be more inartistic than to lose sight of achieved distinctions. The jargon of the bungler and the title in the gallery catalogue explain the painting. The picture proclaims itself. The mass of mankind cares nothing for pictorial art in its refinement, the eye for colour being as rare as the ear for music or the head for mathematics. As the language of paint does not make for popularity, it may be admitted that the portrayal of anecdote and bathos without reference to pictorial harmony is, in its way, perhaps, as respectable a trade as soap-boiling. The demand for the produce is as the demand for chromos or the illustrated penny paper. When, however, it is imposed upon the ignorant as art, the transaction is of another shade.

Those who deprecate a resort to the herb Pantagruelian, because of the pain which it may cause the incompetent, seem quaintly blind to the pain caused the competent by inartistic performance. When a painter without artistry is pilloried, think of the Other Man, of the one with ideals and the wit to be true to them. In the crush of competitive prostitution, the brushman shuns criticism. The artist invites it, for he sees that only

achievement shall fix his final place. Ben Jonson is not alone in the opinion that a self-respecting man can know no keener insult than praise unmerited.

The Art of Folly treats of the Salons of the Palais de l'Industrie *and of the* Champ de Mars. *It was first published in the* Galignani Messenger *of Paris, where it achieved the execration of the brushmen in a manner so complete, so unalloyed and perfect, as to make me the pariah of my parish.*

S. F.

THE ART OF FOLLY

THE ART OF FOLLY

I

FRENCH COLOUR

THE ART OF FOLLY

I

FRENCH COLOUR

I SING of those who roam the happy fields
To paint the lyrics Lady Nature yields;
Of those for whom she chants her primal strain,
Weird, witching undertones of joy and pain;
That silent symphony the master heeds,
The colour music of the skies and meads.

Here is no closet-message to declare,
The lore is lacking but the love is fair.
Stern Wisdom never warms me with her smile,
'T is winsome Folly lures me all the while.
I worship Beauty with her, hand in hand,
And, as the worldlings labour in the land,
Bent with the woes of wealth and high repute,
We stray apart and pluck the better fruit.

So we are happy, with strange gladness warm,
In summer sorceries and wintry storm;
When airs are vernal, and when winds blow cold,
When Hope lies bleeding, and when Want is bold.
We laugh at luck and bite our thumbs at Fate,
And while away the hours with fond debate;
Rich, in the spirit, careless of the bays,
We bid a jest atone for lack of praise.

We envy no one, feel no trader's goad,
For long ago we took the open road;
The road that laughing Folly never shuns,
Pressed by the naked feet of all her sons.
King Demos spurns it as a barren ground,
For creature comforts are not scattered round.
He cannot brook its lack of tinsel shows.
'T is not a crowded road, as Demos knows;
For Monsieur Worldly-Wise will never care
To tread its slopes and breathe its ample air.
We love it tho', we of the picture sense,
Myself and Folly, doomed to give offence;

We bare our backs to every pickled rod,
And dance upon the pruning knives, unshod.

And so, when worldlings hear me say or sing
That Wit is dead and Wisdom on the wing,
They know it 's but an idle rhymer's chant,
Who never could learn prudence of the ant;
Who wastes his day, and bids the World wag by,
And boggles where the wise would edify;
Who has no 'moral' lesson to unwind
To vex the good or soothe the sinful mind.

When I essay to sing a painter's praise,
Know that I 'm laughing at his guileless ways,
To think the man is such an arrant fool
As to respect a sane artistic rule,
Or hope the World will like a work of style,
Or yet that worth may amateurs beguile.

Insult and scorn for him who cares to be
From smirking cant and cheap imposture free;

THE ART OF FOLLY

The rude reproof, the cynic's awful frown,
The careless censure of the gibing Town.
When I accord a bungler gentle blame,
And say his work is usual and tame;
And pretty adjectives impair my song,
And satire seems to wax a trifle strong;
Know that, in sooth, I 'm merry at the joke,
Intent with words unstinted praise to cloak;
But lost in admiration of the man
Who always tries to do the worst he can.
Reverse my lack-wit fancy every time,
And when I 'm serious, pardon me the crime.

All praise to him who can the Public gull,
Whose forte it is for ever to be dull;
His home is fixed in mansions of the blest
Where well-fed 'fakirs' sink to sainted rest,
Where wealth and honour line his peaceful path—
There waits for him no woful aftermath,
The aftermath foreboding Genius fears
When slain Ideals haunt the sunset years.

FRENCH COLOUR

While Wisdom's clever daughters would refrain
From causing any brushman futile pain,
The sons of Folly, with misguided zeal,
May 'break a butterfly upon the wheel';
For unofficial rhymers will not down,
Or cease from troubling here in Paris Town,
While painters from the corners of the earth,
Some sired of talent, some of little worth,
Crowd for the prizes of official art —
The Ribbons and the Medals of the mart.

They cluster like the lackeys of a court —
Not artist-painters but the other sort —
And here 't were fitting in a weary way
To note the trend of competition's play;
How far the artisans of paint abound,
How far the artists, by a stroll around
The rival Salons where the paintings throng
In serried rows, imposture to prolong.
I 'll play the preacher, and for pious ends
Damn all my enemies and praise my friends.

Yet, ere we wander where the Salons wait,
Regard the colour of an elder date,
And, glancing at some names that France may
boast,
Culled here and there from a receding host,
Observe the painters who, in whole or part,
Have touched to finer issues pictured art.

View Cousin's, Clouet's and the Le Nains' paint,
Of drawing crude, of colour cold and faint;
The Fontainebleau group, of Italian aim,
That never blossomed with a famous name;
Eclectic Vouet, of the technique vile;
Le Valentin, of cheap, archaic style;
And sterile Poussin, who could never show
A canvas where he made the colour flow
In aught save stilted manner, thin and weak,
The so-called classic mode some painters seek.

FRENCH COLOUR

O word misused! what art crimes hast thou
cloaked,
What callow crudities and cant evoked!
Let us have done with such abuse of sense,
A classic picture does not give offence;
It is not stilted and devoid of style —
Style only can the classic grace beguile;
The theme is never classic, and we need
A clean revision of the painter's creed.
The classic style is merely what is best,
The kind that triumphs o'er the Attic test,
And no more means the antique than the new —
The classic style is timeless, like the true.

The Madrid master knew what classic meant,
Its subtle shading and serene extent.
He painted Men, not puppets poor and slight,
Begot of palsied hand and blinded sight.
Degas the worth of classic painting knows.
Does Puvis, of the sad, consumptive pose?
The cockney of Phil May has classic grace,
Not so the maid Du Maurier tried to trace.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The landscape men of 'Thirty saw in youth
What classic means, and how it stands for truth;
Not truth of detail; but of mass and tone —
That culmination that is art's alone.

Let us recuperate, be honour bright,
And have the courage of selective sight;
No longer loiter at the bungler's lair,
But learn that Classic Art is free as air;
Free as the beauty worshipped of her sons,
The home-grown beauty that the bungler shuns;
Cast off all doubt and turn our backs on
'bleat'
To wander with the master in the street,
And know again the sanity that said:
'The classic is but the romantic dead.'

FRENCH COLOUR

Tho' Claude selected as no master would —
For architecture mars his every mood —
His method makes for art in many ways,
And he deserves a meed of tempered praise.
He taught the worth of atmospheric tone,
And limned it with a brilliance all his own.
Corot can trace to him his liquid strain,
For ' Corot is a culmination of Lorraine.'

THE ART OF FOLLY

Here are some names the Parvenus revere —
Names cherished of the Louvre from year to year:
The wan Le Sueur, whose poor but pious aim
May still the toil-worn tourist's faith inflame:
Antoine Watteau, of cloying pastoral scene:
And festive Boucher, brazen and unclean:
Tear-trickling Greuze, who played an easy part
By palming incident in place of art:
The canny Joseph Vernet, called ideal
In that he tried discreetly to conceal
His lack of art by tracing without skill
Things no man ever saw nor ever will:
And tireless Vien, of the research vast,
That book-bred one whose works his wit outlast;
Who dreamed Historic painting could be true
Tho' wrought without contemporary view.

FRENCH COLOUR

The Subject-matter moulds the writer's pen —
While painters treat of Objects in their ken,
And deal directly with the surface shown
To re-present the living touch and tone;
External beauty forms their ample claim —
Essential beauty is the writer's aim.
How shall a painter truthfully portray
The form and face of matter passed away?
How shall he re-present and realize
The thing that's dead and lost to living eyes?
Some speak of antique style in modern art.
Did ever Modern play an antique part?
The painter paints the picture of his hour,
And paints no other with historic pow'r.

THE ART OF FOLLY

In measuring the work and worth of Lives,
Of him who dares or him who weakly strives,
Discord must hush and faction fade away,
And Time the poor and private feud allay
Ere History can mark the final place
Of those who fought or faltered in the race.
Years strip the tinsel for result alone,
And leave the fact without false shadow shown;
The Gilding yields to time and bares the clay,
From off the Gold the dust is brushed away.

FRENCH COLOUR

The painters may pursue a clearer line
Unless, like Vien, they deserve to shine
As 'body-snatchers' of the buried Past—
Those viewless vagrants as 'historic' clast,
Who walk with careless eyes and journey wide,
Blind to the beauty budding at their side;
Not seeing beauty where their feet are set,
Convinced that distance beauty can beget;
As Tadema, who paints, sans shame or fear,
'Greek' maidens of a Piccadilly leer.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Velasquez tried to picture Antique themes,
And harried Italy for pulseless schemes;
Yet he, one of the masters paint has known,
Turned back to Life for perfect truth of tone.

Poor Leonardo roamed with restless feet,
His work, with rare exceptions, incomplete.
An amateur of many arts was he,
Master of none that he has let us see;
Despite his eager quest of stately style —
Maugre the Mona Lisa's mirthless smile.

FRENCH COLOUR

No painter, of whatever day or race,
Has ever disregarded Time and Place,
And wrought a masterpiece of dainty art —
Art kisses close to Life nor flunks apart.
She knows, tho' clique and faction clash in strife,
The touch of truth is still the touch of life.

THE ART OF FOLLY

What Leagues are wandered by misguided men
Who think that Beauty lies not in their ken;
That she resides abroad where nations meet,
And sons of exile sons of exile greet;
Or in the fading Past where phantoms glide
To woo the witless to their siren side.
Stray not afield; to your own Hearth she clings,
In your cheap cot her welcome song she sings;
She misses none, she comes to one and all,
In staring day and when the shadows fall;
Always she sings, she does not tire or fail,
She haunts the Temple as she does the Jail;
She haunts the Palace as she does the Slums —
Wherever men abide she surely comes.

Dan Chaucer met her with a Pilgrim band:
And Froissart with the Princes of the land:

FRENCH COLOUR

She lent the lilt of Roland martial aid:
She laughed with Villon in the scaffold's shade:
She prayed with Bunyan in a prison-cell:
She mused with Dante in his home-made Hell:
Melodious Shakespeare wooed her in the strain
That sweeps the circle, charged of Joy and Pain:
Velasquez with the dwarfs that tell to time
How grace of style makes any theme sublime:
Burns in his one clear note, serene and strong —
The song of Love, the democratic song:
Wordsworth in homely lays of calm content
That breathe of peace to tired minds and spent:
She touched Béranger in a garret high:
She came to Heine 'twixt a sob and sigh:
To wistful Chopin in the phrasing choice
Of Music, with its sad and thrilling voice —
The subtile splendour of the singing tone
On waves of wordless passion lightly blown:
She flew to Tennyson on golden wing
Where roses cluster and the robins sing:

THE ART OF FOLLY

De Musset knew her in a squalid street
Where prowling crime and sad-eyed misery meet:
Verlaine in verse that ravishes the sense
Like dreamy odours, delicate and tense:
Poe held her hand where vengeful Memory flames:
Hawthorne, by greenwood ways and Scarlet Shames: —

In countless forms the flowing years prolong
Her changeful music rises clear and strong
And types the Universal, with its surge
Of joys and griefs, its song and solemn dirge;
Those swelling harmonies with witchery rife
That sweep the sounding chords of Common Life,
And mark, like golden memories of youth,
The strain of Beauty in the march of Truth.

FRENCH COLOUR

A proud ‘ Historic,’ of pretentious guile,
The dreamy David won Napoleon’s smile,
And that Red Ribbon of official ‘ fame ’
That crimsons over many a fameless name.

A battle-artist of convincing force,
The Corsican craved studio pictures coarse —
As oft a painter of serene renown
Has proved, in other walks, a sorry clown.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Girodet took the broad and easy path
Of broken colour and Hebraic wrath;
Tackled the Deluge, roamed from clime to
clime,
And failed to make a picture every time.
To glimpse the obvious, by brushmen taught,
The broken colour marks the broken thought.

As Gérard was 'historic' with the rest,
He tried to meet the old, 'historic' test
By painting things his eye had never seen —
Dead kings of wooden face and woful mien.

The 'moral tract' was Prud'hon's plea for
grace,
He helped to make the French a Moral Race.
To huddle on a man promiscuous praise
Is to degrade him in the public gaze.

FRENCH COLOUR

Le Brun arose, fair Vigée of that name,
And tried a fall with coy but cruel Fame.
Nine hundred paintings bear her modest mark,
Nine hundred that reveal no vital spark;
For even when she sought her mirrored face,
And tried to draw it with a girlish grace,
Art turned away to hide a sunny smile,
And praised the Subject, though she damned
the Style.

When Géricault assailed the 'classic' lie,
He launched a Raft that stirs the classic sigh;
But, as he sought to show things as they are,
The glad Romantics hailed him as a star.

With confidence and candour Gros reveals
That mediocrity the rabble feels.
He plagued the Corsican with pest unclean,
And painted him as he was never seen.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Couture called Delacroix, with Gallic wit,
'The dregs of Rubens,' but the words are fit.
They mark the truth-line, maugre all attacks,
And show a sense that Couture's painting lacks.

FRENCH COLOUR

The Orient sketches Decamps tried to limn
Are touched of tawdry colours, crude and grim.
Fromentin had a more authentic style,
And seldom trenched on anecdotal guile;
And yet he turned from paint to toy with
prose
And, as a critic, changed old friends to foes.
He knew the value of official 'bays,'
And the proud function of the flashing phrase.

Ingrès ne'er faltered in his ancient aim,
His work is 'serious, soulful, pure' — and tame.
The trinity of adjectives I quote
Is one the 'classic' cadgers use by rote.

FRENCH COLOUR

Paul Delaroche essayed the murky Past,
And feeble fictions failed him to the last.
The style that fails of beauty, fails of truth —
A thing fact-finders learn in early youth.

The colour tones that Rousseau loved so well,
Like blast and blare of music's bursting swell,
Are flushed of dying Autumn's wizard light
When troubled day sinks into sombre night,
And trace the tragic splendour of a quest
That organ peals of stately strain suggest.
His masterpieces pierce to Nature's mood
When sullen, elemental forces brood
Pregnant of passion, charged of wrathful force—
The solemn pause ere storm clouds take their
course.

FRENCH COLOUR

A restful beauty mellowed Corot's brush,
A beauty tender as the twilight hush.
His witching scenes were wrought in lyric vein
By sheltered woodland ways and peaceful plain;
By sylvan glens of singing tone and tint,
Where what o'clock 's as plain as any print;
By arching Skies with all their banners flown,
With all their gorgeous, melting colours shown;
Clouds idling free, adrift for Summer seas,
Touched of the dawn and ruffled of the breeze;
By pale, poetic poplars in whose shade
The nymphs of Folly frolic in the glade;
The fading embers of the fabled day
When happy Fairies danced the hours away.

THE ART OF FOLLY

In youthful days Jean Millet drew the nude
In festal forms that tried the prurient Prude;
Of bold selection and seductive style,
And colour sensuous as Sappho's smile,
They still transcend *The Angelus* as art
Despite the noisy *réclame* of the mart:
The Angelus! in which the traders hear
That high-priced, holy bell to Hebrews dear,
Of tintinnabulations that proclaim
The market value of a mystic name.

Tiring of nudes, the master's epic hand
Turned to the peasant of his native land,
And, with a genius searching and supreme,
Struck out a new expression for the theme.
His Peasant is no well-fed smirking clown
Dressed up to catch the fancy of the Town,

But worn with bitter want and grinding toil —
The sad and sombre victim of the soil;
And yet as clothed of dignity and grace,
As charged of classic charm in form and face,
As are the matchless marbles Phidias wrought
Ere Art in Athens died of Ethic thought.

When Troyon strikes a sure and subtle key,
And 'lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea,'
Van Marcke and Bonheur seem but Troyon's
dregs —
His cattle walk and stand up on their legs.

FRENCH COLOUR

Daubigny pictured, with a trenchant tone,
The liquid greens of laughing Summer shown.
He caught the hush and glory of the hours
When river marge and meadow, wet with
show'rs,
Stir to the music of a rhythmic rune
As Nature sings the symphony of June.

An expurgated Rousseau, light and gay,
Diaz could trace the sunshine's chequered play
With opalescent *sou-bois* tones and tints
That sparkle like the leaping flash of flints.

FRENCH COLOUR

Tho' talent lacks of genius, fresh and free,
Dupré had talent in a rare degree;
And, tho' convention cannot set the pace,
A sound convention gave his pictures grace.
Recall the water, and the boat, and trees,
The cow, and red-capped man, of plastic ease:
A formula that practice made his own,
An easy method for the Market shown.
The pictures destined to safeguard his fame
Are those marines that bring him public blame,
In that they cast his formula away
And show a more refined romantic play.

THE ART OF FOLLY

A blithe contortionist in colour-rhyme,
Rare Monticelli made his mark with Time.
Less of the Gallic than the Spanish type,
His tonic strain is often over-ripe;
The work is alcoholic, and it gleams
With lunar visions and fantastic dreams;
But what a colour when, with living fire,
He paints the sting and burden of Desire!

FRENCH COLOUR

Isabey's heavy-handed shipping scenes
Are clothed in darkling grays and dirty greens.
As colours mix in hand they move in mind —
The dullard's eye is ever colour-blind.

A Prussian bullet gave Regnault a fame,
To which his fever'd style makes futile claim.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Had Courbet paid attention to his art,
And less to posing in the Paris mart,
And left the Vendome Column on its base,
And taught his truthful tongue a saving grace,
And travelled in the straight and narrow way —
He might have wrought some pictures in his day.
He loved the swinging Seas in shine and storm,
And limned one *Wave* that lives — in flawless form.

There's rue for those who seek achievement high,
And yet, *en route* to Failure, fall and die;
But justice, too, altho' they 'do their best,'
For Time shall put their methods to the test
Of cruel competition with the few —
The masters, who have taught us something new.

And better those whom sound convention
bends,
Than he who on a good intent depends;
But who, without the wit to frame a plan—
And lacking grace to follow those who can—
Learns in the quiet of his sunset hour
The mournful lesson of misguided pow'r.

The master also may at first collate,
And bid Invention upon Knowledge wait;
Take note of workers who have passed away,
Whose simple styles a study will repay,
And mark the faults that dragged the witless
down
Ere they could reach and reap a just renown.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Far-ruling Bąstien won a brittle fame
By modern methods and a kodak aim.
The style of Holbein taught him much of paint;
But failed to teach him a refined restraint.
The system of Lepage eclipsed his art
And bred a school of Bunglers for the Mart;
For, tho' he died so young, his bolt was hurled,
And paint of peasant low-life filled the world.
Countless disciples awful failures breed,
And a bad Bastien 's very bad indeed.

The group that France has realistic styled
Is made up of romantics running wild.
The peasant *poseur* that the many paint,
Portrays the creature as a peasant saint;
Mock sentiment supplies the place of style,
And puts a premium upon peasant guile.
Beauty in ugliness is nothing new,

FRENCH COLOUR

'T is commonplace as Turner's tawdry blue.
There be that treat of realistic art
As tho' the kodak played the leading part.
To Bastien, realism meant detail,
Meant dry statistics, obvious and stale.
No culmination crowned his static strain,
Nor touched it of a realistic vein.
The truth is that he realism lacked,
For realism is by genius backed,
And genius can reject and purge the dross,
And count as gain what dullards deem a loss.

The posing Bashkirtseff, of book-born name,
Who bared her Self, without a shift, to 'fame';
Achieved the artless mob's approving smile
By slavish copying of Bastien's style.

FRENCH COLOUR

Women are lawless in the realm of paint,
And lack artistic conscience and restraint.
Art is with most a fancy or a fad,
Rarely the passion that makes mortals glad.
They ne'er invent a method nor a style;
But plagiarize with a relentless guile;
Till, with their pirate forays weird and wild,
Bold Captain Kidd seems usual and mild.

Meissonier was the leader of a school
That draws the studio hobbyhorse by rule.
He could achieve an eyelash in a way
To win the cultured public's ready pay.
When seeking his position to define,
Compare him with a painter in his line;
With Ter Borch, if you please, and then decide
Which was the painter of poetic stride.

FRENCH COLOUR

Some fondly prate, as careless writers will
When parish swagger dims artistic skill,
Of countless contributions France has made
To art pictorial, aiming to persuade
That many masters of serene renown
Have challenged Expert praise and Public frown.
What are their names, what masterpieces pray
May yet survive to glad a younger day?

The French Romantics, with seductive sight,
Invented landscape for the world's delight;
But now Impressionists are to the front —
While the Mob hisses, with its gentle wont.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Édouard Manet, in his golden youth,
Led up the lightsome quest for *plein-air* truth.
Of fire-new technique, tender yet robust,
In his Impressions he was often just;
Fluidity of movement marked his strain,
And austere Beauty followed in its train.
Indeed 't was he, though few his cause defend,
Who gave to Gallic paint its present trend.

FRENCH COLOUR

Claude Monet saw the need of sun and
shade,
Of dancing light on forest, field and glade,
And, mastering the play of atmosphere,
Moved up the art line nearer Life's frontier.
He can depict vibrations of the light,
And handle colour with puissant sight.
He realizes with a vision tense,
And lords it with a fine and festal sense
In landscapes of an atmospheric tone
As fluctuant as Lady Nature's own.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The dainty Degas has a master's claim,
Tho' Ruskinites aver his art lacks 'aim'
And has no 'moral' lesson to convey
To fend the public virtue from decay;
Forgetting that the work of men of paint
Is not to aid the Devil or the Saint;
But to achieve the surface side of things
And tell how living art to Beauty clings.
Degas paints ballet-girls of grouping strange,
And Paris washer-women at close range,
With such effects of decorative aim
As no Ruskinian twaddle need explain.
He has that perfect sureness of the hand,
Serene, victorious and divinely bland.

Aside from these, can any expert show
Where else the French have bent a mighty bow,
Shattered the white, and made the welkin ring
Till Art pictorial stayed to cheer and sing?

Let the Louvre answer from her stately pile
Where wasted canvas kindles Folly's smile;
Where masters muster; but from foreign lands —
Waiting, with quiet grace, on Art's commands;
Ready to bare their page of glory's scroll,
And answer Adsum *when she calls the roll.*

II

SALON OF INDUSTRY

II

SALON OF INDUSTRY

THE ART OF FOLLY

II

SALON OF INDUSTRY

OBSERVE a Salon of Official aim,
The goal and glory of the gentle game
Where interest of Subject takes the place
Of dainty treatment and artistic grace;
Where medal-chasers, void of style and tone,
Flaunt failure with the sense of shame unknown.
A Salon that, despite repute afar,
Is but a monstrous middle-class Bazaar;
With pigment wasted, canvas cast away,
'Butchered to make a bourgeois holiday.'

Advancing imbecility is plain,
The worse comes to the worst in vulgar vein.
For one success, a picture sure and strong,
A hundred 'custom-made' intentions throng.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Metallic landscapes cry aloud for light,
And pulseless portraits leer from left and right.
Mock sentiment and anecdote abound,
Legend and bathos scattered lightly round;
While studio wantons, graceless, coarse and
crude,
Glare into space with gestures bold and lewd;
The florid type the 'soulful' brushman knows,
That serves, to trance the mob, in fever'd pose.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

The Salon is a bill-board, blazoned o'er
With advertisements of the common bore;
And each recurrent exhibition knows
The sweet credulity a bill-board shows.

In proud profusion, trying to the eyes,
The varied schools come crowding for a prize:
The Warm and Wilful: and the Chaste and
Cool:
The Square-touch: and the Channel squadron
school:
The Futile Frantic, charged of woe and crime:
The Wild 'Historic,' out of space and time:
The 'Soulful' school, of sentimental rant:
The 'Moral' school, of platitude and cant:
The Fleshly school, of subjects piping hot
That fire the yearning prude, and boil the pot:
The Kiss-mama school, of the nurs'ry cares,
Of bread-and-butter brats and angel airs:
The school Religious—and the school Profane,
That mad distinction of a muddled brain:
The 'Christian' school, that libels Christ for
pay,

And trades on clap-trap in the formal way —
The school affected by the Pagan crews
That haunt the holy Latin Quarter stews
For virgin subjects suitable to paint —
Supplied the Sinner but denied the Saint:
The Portrait school, that prostitutes for gold
The stately art Velasquez loved of old:
The Academic, lost to fame and shame:
And other schools *là-bas* that one could name,
Were all this studio jargon of the schools
Aught but the bungler's 'bleat' to boggle rules!

Indeed, all schools are met and mangled here,
All schools but one, the simple and sincere;
The school of Genius, glad To-morrow's school,
That shuns the obvious and the easy rule,
To dwell with Beauty in content apart,
And mould the new expression of its art;
Reporting with a vision trained and free
The many-sided moods of sky and sea,
Fused and transfigured of artistic mind
And born again, transcendent and refin'd.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Is all paint sacramental unto men,
And flawless art a fiction of the pen?
Are shirt-sleeve critics Children of the Rope,
Mere sons of Folly, lost to love and hope?
Is Wisdom wholly hidden from their gaze
In Salons reeking of official 'bays,'
Where dower'd Dulness flaunts a golden crown,
Swells with pretence and lays his honour down?
Defending daubers with a smirking leer,
And damning Merit with a civil sneer,
As tho' in art there were no central sight,
No fact for which the loyal masters fight,
Only Opinion, colour-blind and bold —
The theory of an int'rest craving gold!
Come! let us raid these 'Bleaters,' who essay
To rape a dazzled public's praise and pay.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

With waxen wares see Bouguereau plod along,
With weak but wicked nymphs and satyrs
strong;
With *Cupid Mouille*, and with cupids dry,
Enough to stock a harem, or a sty.
The pasty puppets, void of virile grace,
The turgid torpor and the dollie face,
Untouched of atmosphere or vibrant tone,
Are Bouguereau's stock-in-trade, nor his alone.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Jean Henner's model, of the mawkish strain,
Still tears her auburn hair for Henner's gain.
One hour with pious pose she plays the nun,
And then she plays a part the pious shun;
But whether as a Maid or Magdalene,
A wearying sameness clothes her morbid scene.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

The light that artist-painters toil to woo,
The light that brings to art a beauty new,
Gérôme's deft brush once shed; but sheds no more —
The consecration and the dream are o'er.
The blaze of gold has led from *Ney* to this,
From mountain peaks down to the deep abyss
Where *Cairo-corners* jut, and lions pause
In cool defiance of artistic laws.

King Louis' *Arch of Steel*, by Laurens wrought,
Reveals the Mental Minimum he sought;
Also, the kodak aim and Gallic guile
That pass with Paris parvenus for style.
He does the Big Bow-wow of Salon paint
In forms that fairly clamour for restraint.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

The *Youth of Samson* is a youthful show,
A very youthful thing as paintings go.
The lily lad who combs the lion's mane,
Is of the shoddy sentimental strain
By Léon Bonnat out of Bible lore —
For legend-loving children to adore.

'High art' the wise it call, and traders claim
It cannot come too 'high' to suit their game;
For parvenus judge 'art,' so experts say,
In terms of money, and no other way.
Small cerebration brings the largest price,
As amateurs are never over-nice.

A nude neurotic, of familiar mould,
Such as Lefèbvre has often shown of old,
Proves that his ancient, academic ways
May still arouse a Salon jury's praise.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Jules Bréton paints, on a peculiar plan,
Peculiar peasants, never met of man,
And shapes them into Sermons for the school
That limns but never lives the Golden Rule.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Munkácsy's libels on the Nazarene
No longer lend grotesqueness to the scene;
Those Ghetto subjects, of repellent tone,
Are to their Yankee lovers wisely flown,
While 'portraits,' void of character and grace,
Come thronging to supply their vacant place.
The Munich colour scheme, revealed before,
The stilted pose, repeated o'er and o'er,
Still mark this brushman as in other days
When studio clap-trap charmed the common gaze.
His Salon Mindedness is shrewd and smart,
With no damned nonsense about 'art for art.'

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Paint, the poor wanton, is upon the Town,
Suing for gold to emperor and clown;
Go where you may, you meet her everywhere,
And when you meet her, there 's a trader there.
The Trader! on the nimble dollar bent,
Who plays procurer for a huge per cent,
And starves the living genius out of sight,
And robs the dead of every vested right,
And leaves the Millets of a Christian land
To beg for bread from Pity's niggard hand,
While cheering still the coarse, commercial crew
That peddles pigment to the parvenu,
Till Time, the pitiless, shall fix its place,
And cheap-jacks who have led shall tail the race.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The Jews, God's Chosen People, never fade,
And they control the cultured 'picture' trade;
And, like the one that clamoured on Mars Hill,
They work Hellenic beauty brutal ill.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

One 'Jimmie' Whistler, noted for his bile,
His back-stair methods and amazing style,
Said, once upon a time, in lewd dispraise,
That Art herself was on the Town these days.
A senile fancy, sired of shallow wit,
And, like its author, tainted and unfit;
Serving to prove the looseness of the clown
Who should have said himself was on the
Town.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Art never yet was common to the Herd,
She never yet cared aught for public word,
Nor public frown, nor ribald public jeer —
Art holds her head erect, sans shame or fear.
They little know her blithesome, bonny way
Who think she soils her skirts with common
clay;
While those who ape Sir Pandarus of Troy,
And hope for half-pence thro' her vain annoy,
Find, when too late, the task beyond their pow'r
At *Ten o'clock*, or any other hour.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Harpignies on his matin fame relies,
In sunset years painting the sunset skies;
The sometime touch, the oldtime happy light,
Fading from out his failing sunset sight.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The sins of Vibert are as scarlet grown,
'Gainst Art and all that Art can call her own.
His panels with rude anecdote replete
Are like discordant faces of the street;
The eye suspects them at a half a mile,
The red is so much stronger than the style.
He has the Salon Mind and knows his trade—
All of his work is strictly 'custom-made,'
And so, perhaps, 't is idle to expect
That he will ever dare a new effect,
Or cease to ply his carmined brush by rote
And paint a Cardinal without a coat.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

One lingers loth to judge Jacque's later work,
Longing to pass in peace, and lightly shirk
The hunt for fitting phrase and mellow rhyme
To link his present with a better time.
Art's downward slope is easy to pursue,
No half-way houses interrupt the view.

A pastel portrait by James Guthrie wrought
Is with suave and finished beauty fraught,
That proves he's mastered, tho' the Stipplers scoff,
The art, so little known, of Leaving Off.
A picture is not finished till it shows
No trace of industry to mar repose.

Where are the other Scots whose rounded grace
Can add a charm to any time or place?
Melville and Walton, Henry and Hornel,
Crawhall and Pryde, lovers of field and fell;
And Stevenson, the St. John of them all,
Whose wit and worth push painting to the wall!
No group 's more free of unpictorial claim —
Pictorial magic is its only aim.
The men are young, the best is yet to be,

What is to come not even they foresee.
'T is where a new convention may arise
To gladden more than Caledonian eyes;
Where Robert Burns first sang the Song of Man,
And rose above the parish and the clan.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Respect the rarer thought, the finer strain
That young men, come to consciousness, attain!
Bold navigators of Financial Straits,
Whose golden worth on no endowment waits,
They sail the choppy sea of troublous art
Without a thought of tacking for the mart.
In every age and every port of Life
They clash with Custom in appointed strife,
And safeguard spirit in a world that breeds
Too little spirit for its daily needs.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

John Swan's *Maternity* reflects the gleam
Of old gold colour, like a Maris scheme.
Its failing is o'erfinish, ever sure
To win applause while cockney creeds endure.

A story's current with the stamp of age
How Ruskin, in a wild and 'soulful' rage,
Complained that Swan's lean tiger-cat in clay
Lacked pow'r to preach and point art's Ethic
way
Because the bronze could never be minute,
Nor Swan achieve the whiskers of the brute.

Brangwyn has mastered every maudlin rule,
And cruises with the Channel squadron school.
His tearful tars are burying their dead,
The posing 'mourners' out of focus spread.
At his next port of entry he should strive
To ship a subject that is more alive.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

A Channel canvas, commonplace and tame,
Brings Louis Dessar an official 'fame';
Brings the 'third' medal, that entrancing sight!
A third class compliment, all bronzed and bright.

Renouf picks subjects suited to his brush,
And puts e'en Channel colour to the blush.

The anecdotal Bacon has a mind
Attuned to titles of a school-girl kind.
His Channel produce strikes a gazer glum,
Unless well fortified with Channel rum.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

O Chopping Channel! where the breakers roar
From Newlyn to Penzance on English shore,
From Morlaix to Étaples on Gallic soil,
How brushmen haunt thee for their yearly spoil!
What subjects crowd upon the maudlin eye,
Soft, shoddy themes that stir the gentle sigh:
Boats going 'down' in view of harbour light,
God-fearing, drunken fishers dazed with fright:
Boats shoreward bound, with heavy 'hauls' of fish,
All hands inspired with but a single wish —
Anxious to flood their stomachs with bad grog,
Swearing strange oaths and grumbling at the fog:
The wary housewives lurking close at hand
To make a frenzied rush upon the band,

To halve the happy spoil and share the gin,
And teach their little ones the ways of sin:
The Cross upon the beach where widows wait
To tempt the lads and trap another mate:
The parting of the fishers, muffled warm:
The priest who prays the fleet will ride the storm:
The death at sea, the corpse and canvas pall
Weighted of woful 'bleat' and cannonball:
The harbor bar a-moaning in the hush,
In terror of the dauber's deadly brush:—
We know these paint-worn subjects like a book,
And how they bait the literary hook
Of callow bunglers with a technique vile
Who rate the anecdote above the style.
The end 's not yet, the Tide is whirling in,
And days to be will bring more Channel sin.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Where did De Gravesande learn to paint the
light
Of laughing stars serene in summer Night?
His seaview where the salt-kissed breezes blow,
And mellowed, misty shadows faintly show,
Is like a pictured poem, pure and fair,
Singing of starshine and Sicilian air.

THE ART OF FOLLY

When Louis Philippe reigned in Paris Town,
And taught how nerveless king may lose a
crown,
Healy assaulted paint with eye severe,
And entered on his overpaid career.
Since then he's made the helpless colour flow
In one poor way for more than one poor show.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

'Historic' Rochegrosse daubs with lewd delight
The old, historic Harlot's painful plight;
And makes one wish, quite willing to offend,
It were his own and not bad *Babylon's End.*
A picture can relate itself in mind —
This failure is the unrelated kind.

THE ART OF FOLLY

In youthful days ere Pearce had won a place,
His Bible legends lacked of saving grace;
The aim was pious but the paint a snare,
Tho' later on he sought an ampler air,
And struck a sane and more convincing key
With 'studies' that, to say the least, were free
Of Laurens' square-touch method that of late
Has roused commiseration for his fate.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Salute the Cause that turns a man from art
To tread official paths and please the mart
With crafty painting, raw and commonplace,
The focus shifting with each foot of space
To meet the wishes of the careless crew
That clamours for a dozen points of view.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Clairin has climbed the great *Hors Concours*
throne,
And caters with the thought of shame un-
known:
The old, good rule suffices for his ken —
If at first you don't succeed, fail, fail again.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Lord Weeks is not a lord of dainty art,
His vision is perplexing, and the part
He plays with paint is obvious and sad —
In fancy fierce, in typhoid colour clad.

Where 's Bridgman of the harem houris strayed,
That even Weeks can cast into the shade?

THE ART OF FOLLY

The feeble focus of a Bisbing tells
Of pigment juggled like a 'fakir's' shells.

Howe's cattle-pieces move to seemly mirth,
For sometimes they reveal such pleasing dearth
Of art pictorial that the gazer vows
A law is needed to protect the cows.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Commerce and paint are blent in Ridgway Knight,
And Art, poor thing! in terror takes to flight.
He never startles with a fancy new,
But year by year bares bravely to the view
Some posing peasant in crude colour drest
To witch the proud pork-packers of the West.

The tawdry 'portraits' of the Constant brand
Delight the rampant, unpictorial band
That paints its victims, when it paints at all,
Arrayed like country bumpkins at a ball
In shouting colours of a rainbow hue—
Ranging from cardinal to peacock blue.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

A brushman with *hors concours* to his name
May claim the profit of the portrait game.
This size, his paint seems 'standing out' to say,
Ten thousand francs, and those who care to pay
Can have an honoured place upon the line,
And in full Salon brightly soar and shine.

In other words, the Artless, with the price,
May be embalmed in pigment cold as ice,
And, as a trader's bonus, have the right
To face for eight wild weeks the public sight,
Where they may take their wives and bid them see
True Worth exalted as it ought to be.

Let those who honour trickery as force,
And worship portraits if they 'stand out' coarse,

Turn from these feeble fictions on the wall
To happy human faces in the hall,
And note how gray they are, how low of key,
In contrast with the pulseless paint they see.
Then will they marvel at the man who tries
With colour fictions to assault their eyes,
And portraits that 'stand out' shall take their
place
As vulgar produce shorn of saving grace.

A perfect portrait 'stands within' its frame,
And at a depth behind it still the same
As was the distance from the model's face
To where the painter wrought in time and
place.
The frame 's the window or the open door
Thro' which the painter looks his model o'er,
And none but daubers, dead to art and pride,
Would drag the model on the hitherside.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Rosalie Bonheur, of the Van Marcke touch,
Could never paint too often nor too much
To please the traders of the busy mart
Who deal in names but never deal in art.
Her 'soulful' goats of grim, metallic hue,
On giddy mountain-tops of Reckitt's blue,
Still charm the crowd as when, in other days,
De Goncourt gave her of his painful praise.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Nine feeble figures, of an equal length,
Depicted 'standing out' with frightful strength,
Reveal how Walter Gay, by methods plain,
Can cater for the mob in easy vein.

A glaring light, a row of old tree-trunks,
And pious manikins that pose as monks,
Make up a painting of a style and tone
As good as any that Du Mond has shown.
O sweet 'religious art,' thou pretext tame,
What crimes artistic flourish in thy name!

The word maternal has the pow'r to thrill.
Maternal scenes in paint need little skill;
But, when presented artless, bland and calm,
How on the orphan soul the sight sheds balm!
Miss Klumpke can these mother-scenes reveal
That make an artist-orphan retch and reel.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

George Hitchcock's tulips meet no more the
view,
He's gone to hunt 'fresh woods and pastures
new;'
Gone to paint Virgins for the cockney pit—
Fat saints of shining halos that don't fit.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Where lags the 'artist' of official note
For whom the students cast the careless vote?
And is it true that Anderson has cause
To doubt a Salon jury's cheap applause?
His ineffectual paint, of blue and green,
That 'to be rated needs but to be seen,'
Proves to what pass a worker may arrive
When halting hand essays with paint to strive;
Cold colour in decrepit drawing pent,
Official 'fame' and feeble pigment blent.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

The gay Alphonse who trims a beard with
grace —
And trails the taint of garlic in one's face —
Supplies a card to patrons of his chair
With 'artist' graved thereon in letters fair;
The whitewash painter is an 'artist,' too,
And so 's the hasty lad who limns the shoe;
Yes! all are 'artists,' every Jack and John,
And so the pretty game goes lightly on!

The festive, untamed Chalon slashes oils
As brushman may, the product of his toils
Marring the side of an enormous room
With crass vulgarity and venal gloom.
The Salon catalogue has half a page
Where adjectives in proud profusion rage
Explaining what the brushman failed to show —
A fierce but feeble-minded overflow.

There be that judge, with solemn air and wise,
Jokes by their length, and pictures by their size.
Sweet are the uses of a Salon jury
That will accord a waking nightmare fury —
Without authentic claim to art at all —
Four hundred feet of space upon the wall.
This jury 'bleats' of 'soul' and 'taste' in art,
And yet degrades the Salon to a mart
Where counterfeiters have the easy 'right'
To bilk the public with unchastened sight.

SALON OF INDUSTRY

Thro' open door comes hint of finer grace
As budding April bares her tender face;
And open roads invite to open fields,
To all the witchery that Springtime yields
When the Arch Artist tries the earth and sky
With colour harmonies that glad the eye.
O Lady Nature! how they libel thee,
These men of paint who never help us see!

THE ART OF FOLLY

III

A SONG OF FOLLY

THE quenchless quest of all the troubled years
Is for the clean expression Fame inspheres.
Men seek life's painful secret to disclose
In forms that fit their fleeting joys and woes:
In Word, and Stone, in Colour, and in Song —
The paths of thought to object, that prolong
A little space the records of their part —
The paths that parallel, and men call art.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The pictures of the Past are dead and dim,
The chiselled marbles shattered, torn and grim;
The colour that the Grecians gave to men
Lives only in the record of the pen;
The golden word alone can mock at Time
In changeless beauty as the cycles chime.

A SONG OF FOLLY

The New translates the Old: forms fade and
fail;
But Art abides to tell again the tale
In form as fair, and fitted to the need
That larger thought and broader methods breed.
For ever fashioning, for ever new,
Her moods are many, tho' her paths are few.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Great art achieves the beauty of repose,
That clear content the Milo Venus knows;
That restfulness the Elgin Marbles share,
Serene and ample as the morning air.

A SONG OF FOLLY

All art pictorial is, in sober sooth,
Naught but illusion based upon the truth;
And thus the truth of art, for which men sigh,
Is, after all is said, truth of the lie.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Pictorial art has unity of aim,
Its aim is pleasure, with no rival claim;
Its unit is the picture that portrays
A single point of view, a focussed phase.

In paint, as words, selection turns the scale,
The master shuns, the tyro seeks, detail.
In works of art observe what men omit,
Rigid rejection is the rule of wit.

A SONG OF FOLLY

The picture falls within the centred sight
And types the unity that woos delight.
In that one vision, clarified and true,
A failure to conform would wreck the view
And mark the broken and the static thought
That's always under-done or over-wrought.
The poise of perfect method comes and goes;
But never 'happens' — as some folk suppose.
There are no accidents in art's domain,
The perfect picture types the perfect strain.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Art, in whatever guise, from 'bad' to 'best,'
Must face the moving mind's relentless test,
Must face the test of unity, as mind,
And take its place as common or refin'd.

Mind has one standard, and but one alone,
To measure everything of mortals known.
There 's not one standard for appraising art,
And one for other tools of Life apart.
Back of expression is the mental play,
The form and colour can but chart the way.

Art comes full circle in its ordered sight,
Sustained and perfect in its lyric flight,
Or fails and falters with the colour-blind —
The troubled eye is but the troubled mind.

A SONG OF FOLLY

'The taste for art,' of which the tyros treat —
That phrase to awe the plain Man in the Street —
Has never been, nor ever will be, known.
Art has its grammar and its rules of tone.
The seeing, like the making, calls for care,
For energy of thought, and vision rare.
All art is foreign to the natural man,
And has no place in Nature's primal plan;
Habit is never Nature, and the part
That habit plays is all there is of art.

THE ART OF FOLLY

'The favourable verdict of mankind'—
Born of the hustled public's hasty mind—
Has naught to do with Art in any guise
That artists can respect or recognize.
Is Art a criminal to hide her face
Till juried thick-wits shall approve her grace?
Reject the thought that she will e'er entreat
The favour of the plain Man in the Street.
The genius of appreciation flows
In channels that the plain man never knows;
The talent called intelligence is rare,
It needs a Southern slope and Attic air.

A SONG OF FOLLY

Hegel is dead but writers still abound
To throttle sense and amateurs confound
With cant of art 'symbolic,' and the sheen
Of 'moral' art, and art's 'religious' mien,
Till tired readers, alien to the game,
Think seeing and not-seeing are the same;
Taught, in a tortuous and a cloudy way,
That masters none but 'moral' rôles essay.

Uncommon-sense is common everywhere,
But common-sense is most uncommon rare.

View Raphael, whom puritans adore,
Who flaunted 'moral' canvases galore;
The 'Christian painter,' of the 'pious' tone,
Whose life Vasari has in frankness shown.
And flame-shod Corot, of the Rules of Love,

Whose gay diversions Gallic writers glove.
Or Turner, god of Ruskin's praise and pray'r,
Who painted towns as red as sunsets rare;
Yet Ruskin knows, none other knows so well,
The gentle truth would ring the timely knell
Of all the 'moral' platitude that flows
Melodious in his blithe, effective prose.

In words an artist, Ruskin types the kind
Of British Philistine born colour-blind.
His raging raids in paint reveal a man
Built on the monkish and ascetic plan,
Who hates the Renascence, and loathes the Greeks,
And loves Rossetti's ill-drawn, deathly freaks.
His mind is feminine, and lacks the sense
That springs from sturdy manhood strong and tense.

Pictorial beauty does not charm his eye,
He craves emotion, and the maudlin sigh;
Also, the childish literary guile

That passes with Pre-Raphaelites as style.
He cannot grip the fact, to others known,
That painting has a language of its own;
That masters of the medium impart
Thro' living colour tones their sense of art;
And, just as Music has no need of word;
But soars in sound waves like the song of bird,
So painting in its ample, just domain
Relies on Form and Colour for its strain.

THE ART OF FOLLY

It is not 'wisdom,' 'worth,' or 'moral' theme
That stamps the artist's vision as supreme;
It is that pow'r he has in age and youth
To see all things in terms of ideal truth —
To see in terms of beauty, and to say
All things in terms of music, fresh and gay.

A SONG OF FOLLY

Beauty makes all things fair, from high to low,
Because no imperfections from her flow;
Her very sadness wears a singing face,
Glad with the singing gladness of her grace.
She hides all flaws; fits sorrow to a hymn;
Gives flashing sight to eyes that tears bedim;
She chokes our laughter with a sobbing sigh;
She checks our sobbing with a mirth made high.
In her religion, murder, love and tears
Course rhythmic thro' the even-flowing years
As melodies in one enchantment strong —
The moving music of her matchless song.

THE ART OF FOLLY

To Ruskin, art's a preachment, 'false' or
'true'—
Not an 'arrangement' of enticing hue.
That is his basic blunder, and it breeds
A mirthful medley in his painting-creeds.
'Select naught and neglect naught' is the rule
He fixes for the brushmen of his school;
And no more artless message could be
brought
To mark the range and limit of his thought.

A painting fails of beauty when it shows
The unrelated thing in touch or pose;
For every detail on the canvas shown
Must wed the wooing harmony of tone.

He's an atomic critic, and he tries
To laud atomic painting to the skies;

A SONG OF FOLLY

(Until emotion softly intervenes
And then — he lauds synthetic Turner's scenes).
He worships detail, and his eye delights
In unpictorial, microscopic sights.

A coloured photograph to him is 'fair'
When wrought with 'conscience,' 'soul' and
'loving care';
For, with his British view-point, well he knows
The scenic value of the 'moral' pose.
What pleases him he brands as 'moral right,'
And rates 'immoral' all that shocks his sight.

His theories of art from first to last
Are of an insular and cockney cast.
The landscape revolution wrought in France,
That shook the art world with its fresh
romance,
Rouses in Ruskin no receptive strain;
But only cold, contemptuous disdain.
He does not know to-day, for good or ill,
The French can paint a landscape with some skill.

This narrow culture clearly serves to show
The Nonconformist bigot Britons know.

And yet, when all is said, of praise or blame,
His Paintless Pictures may safe-guard his fame;
The old man eloquent, his writing glows
With precious patches of alluring prose;
And when he treats of landscape, now and then
Delightful lyrics ripple from his pen,
And aëry visions glad the mental sight
That none could paint, and only Ruskin write.

A SONG OF FOLLY

Morals are but the order of the Whole
Typed in the Self, the individual soul.
The moral is the ordered thing in life.
And the immoral — friction, waste and strife.

Morals tho' fair, are often touched of 'bleat,'
To paint with insight is a 'moral' feat;
As moral as the Knob upon a Door,
When fitted to its uses; but no more.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The measure of morality in art
Is whether it achieves its perfect part;
Pretence in any craft is moral crime,
A Creed must reach to act in space and time.
And if there 's aught immoral 'neath the sun
'T is work that never should have been begun;
That uncompleted task of every man
Who toils without a clean artistic plan.
Art 'morals' may be measured by the sight,
Artistic crime is never moral 'right.'

A SONG OF FOLLY

To make a school of Morals out of Art
Is to corrupt them both, in whole and part.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Can colour teach the Sermon on the Mount?
There be who think so, men of some account,
Who year by year with tawdry canvas try
To blaze with paint a pathway to the sky;
As tho' Christ's deathless Word were out of
date,
And two dimensions could make meaning
straight.

A SONG OF FOLLY

What colour-worker shall inform his strain
Of Shakespeare's melody or Plato's brain,
Or tear the mask from Nature and portray
The secret springs of Life's impassioned play?
The spirit is not always clothed of grace,
The foulest mind may flaunt the fairest face:
And yet what master of melodious prose
Shall paint that face in action or repose,
And realize its beauties to the sight
In terms of truth and pure pictorial light?
By its perfection only shall an art
Real pleasure to the expert mind impart,
And not by casual comments upon life,
With information or with maxims rife,
That yield no pleasure of the gladsome kind
Art lovers love, and sadly seldom find.

THE ART OF FOLLY

To draw is not to moralize but see —
External beauty is the painter's plea.
His aim, indeed, is Colour, Form and Line.
A master can make many themes divine —
But to limn anecdote as wittols may
Is to employ the unpictorial way
Of making Subject serve for lack of Style,
In mode as easy as a brushman's guile.

A SONG OF FOLLY

The mental toiler marshals from his brain
Its finest music, its diviner strain,
Or he but plays the charlatan, and seeks
To bilk achievement with commercial freaks.
Yet, tho' he win the plaudits of the mart,
Fame, incorruptible, still stands apart;
And, clearer than the chatter of the Crowd,
Her Silence rises, sombre, stern and proud.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Men do a thing because they find it pays;
But payment follows in uncounted ways.
The blaze of gold beguiles the worldly-wise;
But Genius looks beyond the dollar prize
Unto that better prize, not made with hands,
Born of the sovran Spirit's high commands;
Serenely sure, tho' jesting Pilates doubt,
The prize is from within, and not without.

A SONG OF FOLLY

As it was written in the Book of Fate,
The ranting rabble loves the second-rate;
For the one touch that makes the whole world
kin —
Vulgarity — is commonplace as sin.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The lust of cheap achievement! that fierce
bane,
How many men of talent has it slain!
The ones who falter ere coy Fame will yield,
And, blind to better fun, forsake the field;
Forsake fair aim to court the groundling's
praise,
And cultivate the safe and shameful ways;
And, lost to beauty and the sense of sight,
Would rather be Respectable than 'Right.'
Some say that sore necessity 's to blame,
As tho' a word could cloak their sordid aim.
Millet was poor, and so was Troyon, too;
But poverty did not obscure their view;
The wolf of Need was often at their door,
The wolf that Hals and Holbein knew before.
The peace that passeth understanding came
To teach them patience in their fight for fame;

A SONG OF FOLLY

Theirs was the grit that struggles to survive
And keep the better part the most alive;
And theirs the joy that clean creation brings
When singing Fancy mounts on soaring wings.
The master's pay is in this Joy of Work,
'T is not in lucre that his prizes lurk;
The world may rations give, but rarely more,
For men are brib'd to grovel, not to soar.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Art is a cruel jade, of hopes and fears,
Of climbing fames, of laughter and of tears.
There came with her into the gray Globe's life
Consuming ache, corruption, woe and strife,
And all the fitful fever of desire
That tries her Chosen with a sleepless fire.
Life is not cut in sermons at her game —
Her own perfection is her only aim.
The most self-centred goddess known of Time,
She counts her happy dead in every clime.
Men barter peace and quiet for her wiles,
And welcome pain and shame to win her smiles,
And wander naked thro' unresting days
To share the brittle glory of her ways.
For whoso looks in her imperious eyes
Shall serve her, glad and sorrowing, till he dies.

A SONG OF FOLLY

With Worldlings, ever reticent of speech;
With her own people, Folly's prone to preach.
Oft at the tender twilight's peaceful pause,
Careless of censure, as of cheap applause,
She seeks the lonely haunts of workingmen —
Some sculptor's, painter's, priest's, or poet's den —
And wiles the dolorous midnight grief away
With words of cheer that Wisdom dare not say.

IV
SALON OF MARS

THE ART OF FOLLY

IV

SALON OF MARS

THE Salon of the Champ de Mars is one
That students seek and static painters shun.
It hints of some endeavour, and betrays
The search for subtle modes and simple ways.
It marks revolt against the sterile school
That, pow'rless to create, conforms to rule.

The French are strong in technique, but to quote
That technique 's all of art, as Courbet wrote,
Pollutes fair Reason's pure and crystal fount
And makes the dainty thought of no account.

View De Chavannes, of proud official 'fame,'
A 'cock-eyed primitive,' of mournful aim,
Who scorns the sane and single point of view
And turns aside to cultivate anew
The misty visions of the mad and sad
In gravity and grayness thinly clad.
Yet, tho' his easel paintings give one pause,
His mural-pieces merit sound applause;
Ste. Genevieve, that sheer romantic flow'r,
A Pantheon 'mural,' is replete with pow'r.

SALON OF MARS

Roll paints the play of sunlight on the grass
In racy style, and he can paint a lass
Naked and glad and glowing like a rose
To mark the Line of Beauty in repose.
His leaf-fring'd witchery with woodland scenes
Where chequered sunshine glints the golden greens
Is worthy of the haunts where wood nymphs roam
And, with the Pagan painters, find a home.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The long and sultry question of the Nude —
That theme to fire the fancy of the prude —
Is not so much a problem of the part
As of the whole, the perfect thing, in art.
The hidden ever hints of the unclean,
The lewd retreats in presence of the seen.

SALON OF MARS

The work of Duran lacks refining touch —
That bloom of perfect art that tells so much.
His portraits type the tawdry, and they please
The public eye, the public fancy seize.
A painting in selection sadly marred,
That, wanting unity, shows sharp and hard,
Constrained and vulgar, with a bourgeois air,
Has, with the masters, neither lot nor share.

The Besnard colour schemes are pure and strong,
And beam with beauty like a short, sweet song.
His is the level of distinguished style
Without a touch or trace of book-won guile.
Style! that fair attribute of stately art,
That safeguards Fame and sets the strong apart.

SALON OF MARS

Zorn takes the short cuts with a Gallic '*flair*,'
And seldom hesitates or beats the air.
A water-colour nude that bears his name
Is one to widen any painter's fame.
Of tone authentic and of treatment quaint,
It would arouse the Lady Grundy's plaint
Were she alive, but, as is known, she 's dead —
Dead to the dainty, to refinement dead.

But when of water-colour work I sing,
Let me an artist to your notice bring:
Rare Arthur Melville, of achievement bright,
Who makes the card-board pulse with living light;
Whose Spanish bull-fights and whose Arab scenes
Reveal his perfect grip of all the means
That go to make the product that 's unique—
The toil-won triumph that the masters seek.

Ere Cosmo Monkhouse writes another book
To blind our sense, and bait the trader's hook,
With praise of English water-colour schools,
Let him acquire the water-colour rules:
Go learn that stippling is less used of late,
And teach his pen its ardour to abate

SALON OF MARS

When praising groups whose pale and feeble
style
Beside the master's would evoke a smile.
Let Prout and others fade in fameless night —
Those frigid ones who freeze Monkhouse's
sight —
And let him study surer work and ways
And learn to mete the living genius praise.

This trick of waiting till a man is dead
To twine the trailing laurel for his head,
Smacks of the worldly-wise, who wish to
know
A picture's 'moral' ere they praise bestow.
Yet, as the subject has been brought to view,
I may, perhaps, delight the pious few
In stating, by the way, that Melville 's strong
And shuns the sinfulness of painting wrong.
I might applaud his colour, rich as wine,
His 'one-touch' rendering of tone and line —
A touch unerring, charged of subtle force,
That 's never commonplace and never coarse—

But this is needless, for he 's made his place
Both as a painter and a man of grace
Whose brush sheds beauty as the sun sheds fire,
A man Archdeacon Farrar could admire;
Altho' his style might not archdeacons strike,
For Holman Hunt and Melville paint unlike.

SALON OF MARS

Lerolle a *Flight to Egypt* has essay'd,
And does his best the subject to degrade.
The girls who pose as angels in the sky
Reveal the value of this tradesman's eye;
Feeble in colour, false to art and fact,
They fit, in black-and-white, 'a moral tract'
Such as fond parents give to little boys
To make them weep and blight their youthful
joys.

THE ART OF FOLLY

A slop-pot painted with artistic grace
Is greater than an angel commonplace.

SALON OF MARS

George Inness is *en route* to happy Fame
With restful landscapes of romantic aim.
The vapour of the verdure bathes his work,
And tender half-tones in the foliage lurk.
He knows the hour, the season and the scene
When Lady Nature dons her darkest green.

The *Bismarck* of the fine and lordly pose
Carries the dignity that Lenbach knows.
Such painting is not wrought to disappear
With short-lived, puerile 'pictures of the year,'
As brushmen of the year so aptly class
Their Springtide produce that but blooms to pass.

The painters of a clean, artistic aim
Are alien to the yearly Salon game
Where journalists who cannot understand
Conceive the daub the Big Drum of the band.

Paint-quacks or 'critics,' call them what you will,
Their colour-blindness profits more than skill;
They know the value of conforming line,
And how, for Bottom's ears, the blossoms twine;

As that discreet and ever careful Child
Whose paint essays for *Harper's* are compiled;
Who sounds the brushman's praise in cat's-foot prose,
And has a fondness for official shows;
Who sees in Reinhart, of the fading 'fame,'
'An artist irreproachable in aim':
And rates Frank Millet, of the stippled wile,
'The equal of Dutch masters in his style':
Who deems Childe Hassam 'delicate and fine':
Babbles of Humphrey Moore's 'exquisite line':
And terms Dannat 'the hero of a class
'That few may equal, no one can surpass':
Who finds in Ridgway Knight 'artistic truth,'
And calls, in contrast, Jean Millet 'uncouth':
Who vaunts 'the solemn calm' of Pearce's paint:
The Stewart 'portraits' of the colour faint:
And dotes upon 'a symphony by Gay,'
'The best work of its kind in airy gray':
Who cheers 'the pious corpses' Weeks has shown —

The phrase is Child's, the thought his honest
own —
While Mosler's 'adequate,' and Vail is 'strong,'
And all, to Child, are 'charming' in the throng.

Is Faith an invalid and Frankness dead,
And Truth by smirking Toleration led?
Believe it not till Ruskin reigns again —
That master of the unpictorial pen —
With all his crew from Child to Humphry
Ward,
Praised of the 'duffer,' pitied of the Lord!

SALON OF MARS

America may boast two men of sight,
Two painters of supreme pictorial might—
Whistler and Sargent, who have clearly wrought
Serene inventions of artistic thought.

THE ART OF FOLLY

For many years the prints of London Town
Have treated 'Jimmie' Whistler as a clown,
While Yankee journals tailed the cockney van
And showed him as a snobbish, vain old man.
He 's all of that; but he is something more,
And years to be his prestige shall restore.
When 'Jimmie' sleeps beneath the daisied sod —
In peace, at last, with man if not with God —.
Then we 'll forget the 'Jimmie' whom we know,
The vulgar 'Jimmie,' posed for public show,
Who proves in ways at war with wit and art
That workers and their work are things apart.
And we 'll remember Whistler, that clear type
Of clean achievement, serious and ripe;
Of art successes so sustained and true
They tend to boggle Ruskin and his crew

Who yet maintain — as Turner lovers can! —
A painter is, perforce, a gentleman.

'T was Whistler who, with vision that transcends,
Pressed on serenely where Velasquez ends,
And took the method of the Japanese —
Their shy suggestion and seductive ease —
And shaped for curious Nineteenth-century needs
The colour schemes that only genius breeds.
Their lyricism, perfect yet restrained,
Reveals what goals by reticence are gained.
His etchings and his lithographs beguile
With strange, mysterious subtleties of style;
They take you to high places where, below,
The wavering lights and shadows come and go.
His portraits have a dignity and grace
Such as the Madrid master loved to trace.
His nocturnes and his symphonies invite
With haunting melodies of liquid light
That will transmit their charms to other days
For other Ruskins to refuse them praise.

THE ART OF FOLLY

John Sargent has a magic with the brush
That puts the common painter to the blush.
His method is so large and sound and free
It rings the changes of a lyric glee.
To pose dramatic and to style intense
He weds imaginative colour sense,
And turns off Pictures with a dash and ease
That please the amateur and expert please.
A rare conjunction, such as Corot knew
Who charmed the Many as he charmed the Few.
Sargent has never catered for the mart.
A thing to say! the man respects his art.

SALON OF MARS

Cecelia Beaux affects the Sargent style,
And proud Invention passes with a smile.
As Cassatt apes Chavannes, and Gardner seeks
To trace the arid Bouguereau's angel freaks,
So Sears recalls the Thayer schemes, and lo!
The 'lady artists' lightly come and go.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Ten feeble efforts to depict the nude
Are titled *Music*, as though colour crude
Had aught to do with rhythm, as though name
Divorced from style could bring a bungler fame.
The work that lacks of beauty, lacks of thought —
In paint, as words, real worth is beauty-fraught.

Here's Muhrman with his landscapes of the Heath,
Gray skies above, poetic scenes beneath.
Why does he linger on the white chalk shores
Where the Pecksniffian Ruskinite adores
The musty 'moral' tale, and counts as dross
All paint that does not preach or teach, or toss
A sop to virtue? Has he turned aside
By Happy Hampstead ever to abide?
One knows not, yet 't were well to name in rhyme
A pure pictorial painter of his time,
Whose landscapes with the solemn sorcery glow
That's born of wistful sunsets fading slow.
The cockney 'critics' rate him as a dunce,
And damn him as some did George Morland once;
Despite their damning and their ribald jeers,
The man's an artist, honoured of his peers.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The works of Matthÿs Maris are a kind
To linger in the cloisters of the mind.
His dear, dream-faces call up love-led days
When winsome maidens dwelt on hidden ways,
And stainless Faith transfigured hall and bow'r —
The old gray years when knighthood was in flow'r,
And the Red Swineherd wound his elfin horn,
And casements oped 'in faëry-lands forlorn.'

SALON OF MARS

The foggy Carrière mocks the Maris scheme
Of misty colour, faint as fleeting dream.
What is with Maris an authentic trait,
Copied by Carrière ranks as second-rate.

THE ART OF FOLLY

The style of Dannat seems to shift and veer
And vanish like the snows of yester-year;
Until at last the jesters all expect
To see him try each spring a new 'effect.'

SALON OF MARS

The Raffaëlli sketches, coarse yet quaint,
Are like a Charles Keene black-and-white in
paint.
His Dannat 'study' has official grace,
The sitter's Red Rag proudly in its place
And blabbing *réclame* at the button-hole —
The focussed symbol of a Gallic dole.

THE ART OF FOLLY

O Red Rag of the Legion! cheap but fair,
How Merit flings thee to the startled air!
Thy function in this world is manifold,
The soldier loves thee, and the bourgeois bold;
But there is none that loves thee quite so much
As brushman putting Fortune to the touch.

SALON OF MARS

A sun-kissed field of golden, billowed grain
Is wrought in Cazin's most romantic vein;
That lyric vein informed of art's repose,
And moist with beauty as a dew-drenched rose.

Of drawing crude and colour like the night,
The Ribot paintings still assault the sight.
His scullion and his cook and frying-pan,
And shrouded woman of a pallid plan
With lantern face and long Rossetti jaw—
Defy the canons of artistic law.

SALON OF MARS

Israels caters to the worldly-wise;
But maudlin scenes do not his game disguise.
Is bread so dear in Holland that a man
Need prostitute his art, as painter can
When lured into the broad and easy way
Where Art's assassins strangle her for pay?

Brave Matthÿs Maris could an answer give,
That happy one who never paints to live
But lives to paint, careless of gold and fame —
Contemptuous of the money-catcher's aim.

Of pose eccentric and of colour coarse,
Boldini struggles for a *tour de force.*
He has a clipping cleverness of tone,
And skirts, but never mounts, the master's
throne.
His morbid technique gives the eye offence,
A technipue tiresome to the finer sense.

Technique! that 'vesture visible of mind,'
That stamps its maker vulgar or refin'd.
The right technique! how much there is in that
Your flashy brushman only boggles at!

Blanche is Boldini minus Southern fire;
But one will flicker and the other tire:
Neither is great, for each has won a place
With more of *réclame* than abiding grace.
And yet, perhaps, they meet the Ruskin test,
And 'try, with loving care, to do their best.'

SALON OF MARS

In Yankee mining camps where strangers roam
In search of sudden wealth not found at home;
Where life is cheap and whiskey very 'high,'
And pistols lead to mansions in the sky;
The Music Halls entice the ennuy'd crowd
With cracked pianos, tired of life but loud;
And signs abound, this sign among the rest,
'Don't shoot the player, for he does his best.'

THE ART OF FOLLY

Dwight Tryon can depict an ocean scene
With touch that 's tender and with sight serene.
The colours' easy and seductive flow
Still glads his canvas when the breezes blow
From off the frolic seas, and tides run deep
And waves are flecked of foam, and surges sweep
The yellow sands, and the translucent green
Of laughing water sheds the mellowed sheen
Of golden rays that kiss the shining sea,
As tumbling ocean, turbulent and free,
Beats with the jocund stir of light and life,
And all the Winds are out, and joy is rife.

SALON OF MARS

Melchers has turned from Bible lore at last,
And seeks, with saner work, to blot the past.
His sight is normal when, rejecting guile,
He weds to truth of substance truth of style.
His kind-eyed Holland maids of canny face
Are touched of colour and convincing grace;
And sometimes with that tempered technique sing
That Henry James would call 'the real right thing.'

THE ART OF FOLLY

What of the splendid Monet's merry men
Who focus all the sunshine in their ken,
And muster in these halls with pigment coarse,
Devoid of many things but not of force?

Convention is to seek, and, strange to say,
No culmination crowns their shining way.
They 'hold the mirror up to Nature's face,'
But hold it up, at times, too close for grace.
There lurks an ideal here, and one sublime,
The labour pains will sink to rest in time.

SALON OF MARS

The sun-god men who work in shadeless ways,
And welcome beauty born of golden days,
Should not forget that Nature yields to mood,
That, at her best, she's neither coarse nor
crude.
Her superb palette has both tint and tone
No painter of impressions need disown.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Impressions that impress are somewhat rare —
To catch the shiver of the open air
And paint it with a touch refin'd and true
Is only given to the chosen few.
Impressions are experience, and they teach
The painter's depth, his consciousness and reach.

SALON OF MARS

There are three words, synonymous and clear,
That picture lovers everywhere revere:
The classic, the impressionist, and real —
Three words of simple force the masters feel.
The first Impressionists of classic aim
The Land of Cherry Blossoms gave to fame;
And they 're the Chiefs of realism too —
The Classic Realists of impressions true.

THE ART OF FOLLY

Claude Monet uses, with essential ease,
The basic method of the Japanese
Who trace the *feeling* of the object shown
Thro' realism of the form and tone.
In handling masses they reject detail,
And triumph where atomic painters fail.
Like the old Greeks they better Nature's best,
And this is Classic Art's abiding test;
For ideal truth is Beauty's inner law
Freed from the trammel of material flaw.

Hundreds of years ere Monet saw the light,
Or Degas came, to charm with central sight,
Ere Whistler was, or Beardsley had his hour,
The Japanese Immortals rose to pow'r,
And wrought, with startling truth of type and
place,

SALON OF MARS

Supreme impressions of exquisite grace,
Steeped in the shining sorceries that attain
The singing splendour of the Grecian strain —
That old, undying charm that woos delight
In flawless beauty 'winged for world-wide flight.'

They drew the morning with its eager air:
The twilight pause that hushes toil and care:
Starshine and moonlight: and the flaming rays
Of flooding sunshine in meridian blaze:
Autumn's hoar-frost and Summer's silver dews
That mock the misty opal's magic hues:
The country's peace: the city's stir and strife
When moving masses crowd the streets with life:
Landscapes and figures: flying birds and bees:
Rainstorms and rainbows: and emblossomed trees:
The peach's bloom: the lily's saintly grace:
The single flower in the slender vase:
Water that runs: fishes that float and swim
In streams of liquid sapphire sweet and dim:

THE ART OF FOLLY

Snowscapes that shed the Winter's ghostly glow
Where wind-tossed flakes are driven to and fro:
Poetic mountain-tops that stretch away
Sun-kissed and solemn in the dying day:
The ocean's sparkle and reluctant surge
As laughing colour lyrics meet and merge:
Nocturnes and harmonies that take the breeze
And catch the glamour of the dreamy seas:—
All these they drew with beauty that endears
And Glory guerdons down the sordid years.

They met and mastered every phase of art
That Occidental painters may impart;
And still on fan and screen, on vase and urn,
Can teach us more than we shall ever learn.

